

Spring Elections Guidance 2018-19

This Guidance applies to the election of Sabbatical Officers, Student Officers and Student Trustees as part of the Spring Elections cycle. It is made under the By-law, which contains more information as to the technical provisions made for the election.

Welcome to the Spring Elections!

The annual Spring Elections are one of the largest events in the SUSU calendar. One of the most exciting parts of each election is to see the innovative campaigning methods that candidates come up with. We want to enable this creativity wherever possible, while also ensuring elections are run fairly and properly. To this end, the Elections Project Team and the Returning Officer have set out some guidelines for how elections are run.

If you have any ideas that aren't covered by these guidelines, or you are unsure about anything, please ask us first.

Who's who

- **Returning Officer**

The Returning Officer (RO) is a person independent from the Students' Union who is appointed by Union Senate to oversee the running of the election. They will attend and oversee the count, but will normally only be contacted during the election if a situation arises that is too serious for the DRO or Elections Project Team to deal with.

- **Deputy Returning Officer**

The Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) is always a full-time officer, in accordance with Rule 7 our Vice-President Democracy and Creative Industries has been appointed as DRO and will oversee the day-to-day running of the election.

- **Democracy Team**

The Democracy Team consists of two staff members: the Democracy Co-ordinator and the Director of Advice and Representation. The first point of call for any questions or queries you might have during the elections period should be the Democracy Coordinator, you can contact the team via elections@susu.org

- **Elections Project Team**

The Spring Elections Project Team is made up of the Vice-President Democracy and Creative Industries (DRO) and relevant Union staff. The Project Team is there to coordinate the Elections and may be called upon to make decisions on complaints where necessary.

General principles of elections

The primary principle is that campaigning should be conducted in the spirit of the elections. It should be positive and friendly, not negative or confrontational. Below are our general principles of the elections:

- A. Campaigning is an activity or endeavour that primarily seeks to solicit votes or electoral advantage for an individual. This can be anything from wearing a t-shirt, changing a cover photo or going out and talking to students.
- B. Campaigning can only happen during the period agreed and published by the Elections Project Team to allow candidates to focus their efforts. A potential candidate's public notification of intent to nominate themselves, or a statement that they have nominated themselves, is not considered campaigning.
- C. Campaigning is about persuading people to vote for you.
 - You are free to give counter arguments for other candidates' ideas (perhaps with what you would do) but any critique is solely limited to ideas and campaigns and must not be deemed personal.
 - You must be careful not to bribe, intimidate, harass or bully voters. This includes attempts to influence a student's vote whilst they are voting.



- D. Candidates are responsible for the members of their campaign team and will be held to account for the actions of individuals campaigning on their behalf and with their knowledge and consent.
- E. There are so many ways to canvass other than posters and flyers. You may need to come and chat to us before you try something new so we can check it fit with the rules but think outside the box and have fun with your campaign. More on this in the Campaigning Dos and Don'ts below.
- F. The Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer and the Democracy Team are here to help you. They also have the broad power to deal with campaigning that doesn't promote the spirit of elections.
 - If you do something that isn't allowed, you may have to speak to us to explain what happened and why. In serious cases, this could lead to publicity being removed or your campaigning being suspended for a period of time. In the worst cases, more serious repercussions, including votes being taken away or being removed from the election.

Campaigning Dos and Don'ts

1. Promotional methods

Within or on Union buildings, publicity (including posters or banners) may only be placed in accordance with instructions issued by Union staff.

- ✓ Inside buildings, please only use white tack or blue tack (not gaffer tape, sellotape or similar)
- ✗ You can't put things on painted walls, doors, cover any existing signage or artwork, or block windows.

Outside Union buildings, publicity may only be displayed with prior permission from the relevant authority, or in the rest of the University, from the relevant school office.

- ✓ You can put up posters on the Redbrick area. Outside this area publicity is liable to be removed, but if done unobtrusively it will usually be allowed to remain.
- ✓ In the rest of the University, you should contact the relevant school office.

Publicity must be removed within 24 hours of the close of voting. Normally, this is done as soon as voting closes and candidates help each other to remove publicity from campus.

There are some other things you can't do. They include:

- ✗ using stickers or chalk,
- ✗ putting up posters in toilets.
- ✗ campaigning within sight of a polling station, or
- ✗ making unreasonably loud noise in the vicinity of University buildings.

2. Social media and email

- ✓ There are no particular restrictions for social media, such as Facebook groups. Administrators may choose to restrict posting as they see fit, so long as they do so equally to all candidates.
- ✗ You can't use mass email lists for campaigning as this is spam. This includes club, society, Union and University lists.

3. Whilst campaigning

Whilst campaigning, you are of course subject to the various policies and regulations of the Union.

- ✗ In order to ensure that there is no accidental or inadvertent breach of the Staff-Student Partnership Agreement, you cannot reference specific SUSU staff members in your elections campaign.
- ✗ As these are student elections, they should only be contested by and between students. Accordingly, you cannot accept sponsorship (whether commercial or otherwise) as part of your campaign.
- ✗ You are not permitted to publicly endorse each other or form a slate. This is usually where a group of candidates from different roles will publically share their intention to vote for each other and encourage others to do the same. This guideline also prohibits candidates from seeking endorsement from the



outgoing Sabbatical or Student Leader of the role they have run for as current SUSU officers must remain impartial throughout.

- ✓ However, do support each other during the Spring Election process. Candidate wellbeing is a priority during this hectic period so please keep this in mind and try to work together. You can campaign together so long as your activities and messages are not in breach of the rule above.
- ✓ Candidates can seek endorsement from a Club or Society, which can be the same Club or Society that they are involved with in a committee role or as a member. However, a student who holds any role within a Club or Society may not campaign in the election using any resources, office space or social media accounts that are available to them by virtue of their holding that role. If a Club or Society wishes to endorse a candidate, they must gain the approval of their members before doing so.

4. Electronic devices

- ✗ A person who is a candidate or a member of a campaign team must not provide, or offer to provide any electronic device in their possession or control to any other person to use for voting.

5. Health & Safety

Candidates are responsible for their own health and safety, and that of others that their campaigning affects.

- ✓ The Union will facilitate the placement of publicity at heights within Union facilities, and further information will be provided for this service.
- ✗ The roof of any building is out of bounds unless accompanied by an authorised individual.
- ✗ All candidates should avoid creating slips, trips and hazards whilst campaigning; including trailing leads, setting up near stairs and steps, blind corners or heavy use areas.

6. Elections budgets

The Elections Project Team will set limits on how much you can spend on your campaign and can provide support for funding and materials.

- ✓ Expenditure must not exceed the budget limits set for that election.
- ✓ Candidates must list all their expenditure via their budget page online at www.susu.org/me. Expenditure must be accompanied by a receipt or invoice.

If you're planning on using another method of campaigning, or you're unsure about anything to do with the budget limit, please get in touch with us first to talk about your idea.

- ✓ Any materials received free of charge or donated will need to have their current market value evaluated so that they can be included on your budget page.

Budget requests will be considered within by the end of the next working day. Default costs for a range of common requests are given on the website.

- ✓ Candidates must keep receipts for purchased material. Claims will only be paid on production of valid receipts and all claims must be submitted within one week of the close of voting.

Other campaign guidance

7. Breaches of the rules & complaints procedure

- If you are ever unsure about something that you or another candidate is doing, drop an email to the Elections Team via elections@susu.org. We are always happy to provide you with advice and support.
- In the event that a matter comes to our attention that cannot be dealt with via words of advice, the Deputy Returning Officer will conduct an investigation. In some cases, complaints may be referred to the Elections Project Team for a decision.
 - In the most serious cases, the Returning Officer will make the decision. Where deemed appropriate, the decision will be made available on the website but complainants will always remain anonymous.



- Complaints received after the count time should be made to the Returning Officer in writing within 7 clear working days of the offence, unless circumstances preclude this time period being adhered to. The Returning Officer will deal with them in line with Rule 7.

8. Union Media and the elections

- Union Media groups must ensure that their elections coverage is fair and unbiased. All candidates must be offered the same opportunities to participate in media coverage, and reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure they are able to take up any opportunities.

